

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 4 - 13, 15 - 23, 26, 29 and 30 are currently pending in this patent application, claims 3, 14, 24, 25, 27, and 28 having been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer.

Claims 29 - 32 have been added in order to more particularly point out, and distinctly claim the subject matter to which the applicants regard as their invention. The applicants respectfully submit that no new matter has been added. It is believed that this Amendment is fully responsive to the Office Action dated June 14, 2007.

The applicants have submitted herewith new FIG. 11 in response to the Examiner's request in a telephone conference conducted on or about August 29, 2007.

The applicants thank the Examiner for allowing claims 1, 2, 4 - 13 and 15 - 21 (see, e.g., item 4, page 4 of the outstanding Action).

Claim 14 is objected to for the reasons set forth in item 2, page 2 of the outstanding Action. The applicant respectfully request reconsideration of this objection

As indicated above, claim 14 has been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. In its place, the applicants have added claims 29 and 30. Added claim 29 includes therein the subject matters of claims 1, 12 and 14, while claim 30 includes therein the subject matters of claims 2, 12 and 14.

In view of the above, the outstanding objection to claim 14 is moot, and its withdrawal is respectfully solicited.

As to the merits of this case, claims 23 - 28 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) based on any one of Ozu (U.S. Patent No. 5,782,622, Arai (JP 56-165788) or Hashimoto (JP 01-253586). The applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this rejection.

In order to help expedite the processing of this patent application to issuance, the applicants have canceled claims 24, 25, 27 and 28 without prejudice or disclaimer. Thus, the outstanding rejection of these claims is now moot.

As to claims 23 and 26, the claimed structural arrangement, wherein "a diameter of a hole closer to a central portion of said porous plate is smaller than that of a hole closer to an outer periphery of the porous plate," is not disclosed in any of the cited references. The advantage or benefit derived from such claimed structural arrangement (similar to that in claims 1 and 2) is that

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“a central portion of said porous member is thicker than an outer periphery of the porous member,”
an advantage or benefit similarly not taught in the cited references, singly or in combination.

In view of the above, the withdrawal of the outstanding obviousness rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) based on any one of Ozu (U.S. Patent No. 5,782,622, Arai (JP 56-165788) or Hashimoto (JP 01-253586) is in order, and is therefore respectfully solicited.

In view of the aforementioned amendments and accompanying remarks, claims, as amended, are in condition for allowance, which action, at an early date, is requested.

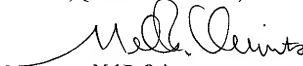
If, for any reason, it is felt that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact the applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this case.

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In the event that this paper is not timely filed, the applicants respectfully petition for an appropriate extension of time. Please charge any fees for such an extension of time and any other fees which may be due with respect to this paper to Deposit Account No. 01-2340.

Respectfully submitted,

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PATENT TRADEMARK OFFICE

Enclosure: Submission of New Drawing (Fig. 11)